United Nations ST/AI/2000/20

Secretariat

22 December 2000

Administrative instruction

Official travel

The Under-Secretary-General for Management, pursuant to section 4.2 of the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1997/1, and for the purpose of implementing staff rules 107.1, 107.2, 107.3, 107.6, 107.7, 107.8, 107.9, 107.10, 107.13, 107.15, 207.1, 207.2, 207.3, 207.4, 207.5, 207.6, 207.15, 207.16, 207.17, 307.1, 307.2, 307.3 and 307.4, hereby promulgates the following:

Section 1
Scope

1.1 The provisions of the present instruction shall apply to official travel of:

(a) Staff members appointed under the 100 and 200 series of the Staff Rules and their eligible family members;

(b) Staff members recruited under staff rule 301.1 (a) (i) on short-term appointments for conference and other short-term service;

(c) Staff members recruited under staff rule 301.1 (a) (ii) on appointments of limited duration, except as otherwise provided in the administrative instruction on appointments of limited duration.

1.2 When travel is authorized for individuals who are not staff members, such as consultants, individual contractors or members of committees, it shall be on the basis of the standards established for staff members by the present instruction, except where otherwise expressly provided.[1]

Section 2
Official travel of staff members and their eligible family members

2.1 Official travel may be authorized for staff members in accordance with staff rules 107.1, 207.1 and 307.1 and the conditions specified by the Secretary-General in respect of specific forms of official travel.

[1] The special rules governing payment of travel expenses and subsistence allowances in respect of members of organs and subsidiary organs of the United Nations are contained in ST/SGB/107/Rev. 6 of 25 March 1991.

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2.2 Official travel may be authorized for eligible family members of staff appointed under the 100 and 200 series of the Staff Rules in accordance with staff rules 107.2, 107.3 and 207.2 and the conditions specified by the Secretary-General in respect of specific forms of official travel.

Section 3
Authorization for official travel

3.1 Under staff rules 107.6, 207.4 and 307.2, all official travel must be authorized in writing before it is undertaken. In exceptional cases, staff members may be orally authorized to travel. In such cases, written confirmation shall be required.

3.2 Requests for prior authorization of official travel by Secretariat officials at the level of Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General, and by heads of mission in the field, shall be submitted to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General in accordance with instructions issued by that Office. Such requests shall be made through the submission of form SG.33.

Section 4
Standard of accommodation

4.1 The standard of accommodation for official travel shall be determined in accordance with staff rules 107.10, 207.6 and 307.3, as complemented by the provisions of this section.

4.2 For official travel by air, the standard of accommodation shall be economy class, except as provided in (a) and (b) below:

(a) For Under-Secretaries-General, Assistant Secretaries-General and, where applicable, their eligible family members, the class immediately below first class shall be provided for travel on official business, on appointment, reassignment or separation, on home leave and family visit, irrespective of the duration of the particular flight. However, Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General designated to represent the Secretary-General on ceremonial occasions or to undertake missions in the exercise of the Secretary-General's good offices under the Charter of the United Nations or resolutions of the General Assembly or the Security Council may, on the approval of the Secretary-General, be provided with first-class travel accommodation, irrespective of the duration of the flight involved;

(b) For staff members below the Assistant Secretary-General level and, where applicable, their eligible family members, the class immediately below first class shall be provided for travel on official business and on appointment, assignment or separation:

(i) When the duration of a journey is nine hours or longer;

(ii) For round-trip travel, when the duration of either journey is nine hours or longer.

(c) For the purposes of (b) above, the duration of a particular journey shall be determined on the basis of the combined flying time of all legs of the journey to a given destination by the most direct and economical route available, provided the journey is not interrupted for official stops of more than one day. The flying time shall include scheduled stops for change of planes or other purposes, but shall

exclude travel time to and from airports. Up to four hours for connections between flights may be included in the flying time for the particular journey.

4.3 Air travel accommodation under the applicable standards defined by section 4.2 shall be provided at the most economical rate appropriate, including discounted airfares. The Organization shall assume responsibility for the surcharge that may be imposed after tickets have been issued if changes in the original travel plans were necessitated by the Organization or for other compelling reasons.

4.4 For official travel to missions or conferences, special arrangements may be made for group travel, in which case the provisions of section 4.2 (a) and (b) may not apply.

4.5 A standard of accommodation for air travel higher than that authorized under normally applicable rules may be approved on an exceptional basis when, in the opinion of the Secretary-General, special circumstances warrant it, such as for duly certified medical reasons. Requests for exceptions shall be submitted in writing to the Under-Secretary-General for Management well in advance of travel.

4.6 In accordance with staff rules 107.10 (f), 207.6 (b) and 307.3 (b), if a staff member or family member travels by more economical accommodation than the approved standard for the authorized destination, the United Nations shall only pay for accommodation actually used, at the rate paid by the traveller. Use of a more economical fare shall not entitle the staff member to apply any savings to any deviation from the approved itinerary nor to additional stopovers or further transportation. For travel on home leave or family visit, special arrangements may be authorized. The staff member shall be responsible for any delays, penalties or additional expenses incurred as a result of taking a lower fare or making special arrangements.

Section 5
Travel time other than on home leave or family visit

Travel time by direct route and normal mode

5.1 On travel by the most direct and economical route, either by air or by the fastest available surface mode of transportation when air travel is not feasible, actual travel time spent during a working day shall not be charged to annual leave. Neither shall annual leave be charged for a stopover authorized for rest purposes in accordance with section 5.4 (c), or for unavoidable stopovers which cannot reasonably be regarded as rest stops.

5.2 A staff member shall not be entitled to additional days of annual leave to compensate for official travel on days considered as non-working days at the staff member's duty station.

Travel time by other than direct route and normal mode

5.3 Staff members travelling for all or part of a journey by an indirect air route, or wholly or in part by surface when air transportation is the normal mode, or by other than the fastest available surface means of transportation when air travel is not feasible, shall be granted travel time not chargeable to annual leave only for the time which would have been required had the travel been undertaken by the most direct route and normal mode.

Rest periods and authorized stopovers

5.4 For travel by air or mostly by air, staff members shall be entitled to rest periods before commencing duties or a stopover for rest purposes as follows:

(a) If the scheduled time for the journey is more than 6 hours but not more than 10 hours, the staff member shall not normally be required to commence duty within 12 hours of arriving at the destination;

(b) If the scheduled time for the journey is more than 10 hours but not more than 16 hours, the staff member shall not normally be required to commence duty within 24 hours of arriving at the destination;

(c) If the scheduled time for the journey is more than 16 hours, the staff member may have one stopover for rest purposes, which shall not exceed 24 hours, at an intermediate point in the journey, with travel subsistence allowance. If the final stage of the journey is more than 6 hours, the staff member shall not normally be required to commence duty within 12 hours of arriving at the destination. As an alternative to the rest stopover, the staff member may have a rest period not exceeding 24 hours on arriving at the destination;

(d) Rest stopovers shall normally be taken in the course of an air journey. However, a rest stopover may also be taken at the end of the air portion of a journey while awaiting onward travel by another mode of transportation.

5.5 In computing the scheduled time under section 5.4, a maximum of four hours shall be allowed for each necessary waiting period between connecting flights.

Section 6
Travel time on home leave or family visit

6.1 For travel on both the outward and the return journey on home leave or family visit, staff members shall be granted a fixed amount of travel time not chargeable to annual leave, determined on the basis of the most direct flight available as follows:

(a) One day for each journey of less than 10 hours;

(b) Two days for each journey of 10 hours or longer but less than 16 hours; and

(c) Three days for each journey of 16 hours or more.

6.2. The travel time approved in accordance with section 6.1 shall include any authorized rest period or stopover made by the staff member and the time required for any additional journey to or from:

(a) The place of home leave as established under staff rules 105.3 (d) and 205.2 (c) for travel within the home country, or

(b) The place of entitlement for family visit travel when the place of entitlement is in a country other than the home country.

6.3 The fixed amount of travel time to which staff members are entitled shall be set out in the information circular on official travel issued by the Under-Secretary-General for Management.

6.4 One stopover for rest purposes, which shall not exceed 24 hours, may be authorized at an intermediate point in the journey, with travel subsistence allowance,

for journeys of 10 hours or longer for staff members travelling on home leave with children under the age of 12, when they have not availed themselves of the lump-sum option under section 10. No stopovers shall be granted in connection with family visit travel or education grant travel.

6.5 An adjustment of up to two additional days, not chargeable to annual leave, may be made if the staff member can show that the actual travel time by the most direct and fastest mode of transportation, including any authorized stopover, exceeds the approved amount of travel time. There shall be no entitlement to travel subsistence allowance for the additional days of travel time.

Section 7
Deviations from the approved route, mode of transportation or standard of accommodation

7.1 Pursuant to staff rules 107.8 (b), 207.5 (c), 207.6 (b) and 307.3 (d), when staff members are permitted to travel for their personal convenience by a route, mode of transportation or standard of accommodation other than the approved one, their entitlement in respect of a particular journey shall be limited to the maximum travel expenses and travel time to which they would have been entitled had the travel been undertaken by the approved route, mode of transportation and standard of accommodation. The maximum travel expenses shall be calculated on the basis of the most economical airfare by a direct route at the appropriate standard and rate, in accordance with section 4.

7.2 Staff members travelling by an indirect route who are otherwise eligible for a stopover shall be entitled to such stopover with appropriate travel subsistence allowance on the basis of travel time by a direct route, provided that the stopover actually made complies with the requirements of sections 5.4 (c) and 6.4 of the present instruction.

Section 8
Terminal expenses

8.1 Reimbursement of terminal expenses authorized under staff rules 107.13, 207.15 and 307.3 (a) shall be made as follows:

(a) Terminal expenses incurred for each required trip by means of public conveyance between the airport or other point of arrival or departure and the hotel or other place of dwelling shall be reimbursed in a fixed amount in respect of the staff member and, where applicable, each eligible family member authorized to travel at United Nations expense. Such fixed amounts, and any reduction applicable when an official United Nations or government vehicle is made available for the trip, shall be set out in the information circular on official travel issued by the Under-Secretary-General for Management.

(b) No expenses shall be reimbursable in respect of:

(i) An intermediate stop which is not authorized, or

(ii) An intermediate stop of less than six hours which does not involve leaving the terminal, or is exclusively for the purpose of making an onward connection.

8.2 Terminal expenses paid in accordance with section 8.1 shall be deemed to cover all expenses for transportation between the airport or other point of arrival or departure and the hotel or other place of dwelling, including transfer of baggage and other related incidental charges.

8.3 Claims for reimbursement of terminal expenses shall be made in accordance with the provisions of section 11.

Section 9
Travel advances

9.1 An advance of 100 per cent of the estimated travel subsistence allowance may be made to a staff member authorized to travel on official business. No advance shall be made in respect of other additional reimbursable expenses, such as terminal expenses under staff rules 107.13, 207.15 and 307.3 (a), or miscellaneous travel expenses under staff rules 107.19 and 207.19.

9.2 No travel advance shall be granted for travel on separation from service.

9.3 An advance of up to 75 per cent of the estimated travel subsistence allowance may be made to individuals who are not staff members, such as consultants, individual contractors or members of committees.

Section 10
Lump-sum option for travel by air on home leave, family visit or education grant travel

10.1 For travel by air on home leave, family visit or education grant travel, staff members appointed under the 100 and 200 series of the Staff Rules may opt for a lump-sum payment in lieu of all entitlements related to the particular travel by air.

10.2 The lump sum payable under this section shall amount to 75 per cent of the full economy-class fare by the least costly scheduled air carrier between the staff member's duty station and:

(a) The closest airport to the established place of entitlement for home leave or family visit travel;

(b) The established place of home leave or the educational institution, whichever is the less costly, for education grant travel.

For children entitled to reduced-fare tickets, the lump sum shall be 75 per cent of the applicable reduced fare.

10.3 By selecting the lump-sum option, a staff member agrees to waive all entitlements relating to home leave, family visit or education grant travel that would otherwise have been payable, except as provided in section 10.4. No additional payment shall be made once the option has been exercised.

10.4 The following entitlements shall not be affected by the exercise of the lump-sum option:

(a) Travel time not chargeable to annual leave shall be granted in accordance with section 6;

(b) Compensation under Appendix D to the Staff Rules, provided the travel is by a direct route between the staff member's duty station and the established place of home leave, or authorized place of family visit travel, as applicable.

10.5 The lump-sum option shall not be available on a partial basis. It must cover both the outward and the return journeys for home leave, family visit or education grant travel, and all travel related to a particular home leave by the staff member and his or her eligible family members, even when separate home leave travel has been authorized. However, when a staff member's home leave travel is combined with travel on official business, the staff member may exercise the option in respect of his or her eligible family members.

10.6 Once the lump-sum option has been selected, it shall not be possible to revert to the normal travel entitlement for the specific travel.

10.7 The Organization shall not be responsible for delays or additional expenses that may be incurred or liabilities that may arise as a result of the exercise of the lump-sum option. It is the staff member's responsibility to take out appropriate travel cancellation insurance. However, when the exigencies of service make it imperative for the staff member to postpone the home leave or family visit travel for which the lump sum was paid, the Organization shall assume responsibility for surcharges or fees that may be imposed as a result of the ticket changes, but not for any fare increase.

10.8 Staff members who wish to obtain the information necessary for them to decide whether to exercise the lump-sum option shall so inform their executive or administrative office, which will proceed in accordance with the procedures set out in the information circular on official travel issued by the Under-Secretary-General for Management and ensure that the staff member completes part B of form PT.165, "Lump-sum travel".[2]

Section 11
Travel claims

General

11.1 Staff members shall, within two calendar weeks after completion of travel other than under the lump-sum option, submit a completed travel reimbursement claim on form F.10 to their executive or administrative office, in accordance with the instructions set out in that form, including those governing the documentation to be submitted.

11.2 Recovery of travel advances through payroll deduction shall be initiated if a staff member fails to submit a duly completed F.10 form, together with the supporting documentation, within two calendar weeks after completion of travel.

11.3 If, on review of the claim, it is determined that the travel advance exceeded the amount of reimbursable travel expenses, the staff member shall be informed of the amount of overpayment, which shall be recovered through payroll deduction.

[2] Where necessary, form PT.165 may be adjusted at offices away from Headquarters.

Travel under the lump-sum option

11.4 Staff members having selected the lump-sum option under section 10 of the present instruction shall, within two calendar weeks after completion of travel, complete part C of form PT.165 and provide the certification and supporting evidence required in that form.

11.5 The entire amount of the lump sum shall be recovered through payroll deduction if the staff member fails to submit a duly completed PT.165 form and the requested documentation within two calendar weeks after completion of travel.

Section 12
Final provisions

12.1 The present administrative instruction shall enter into force on 1 January 2001.

12.2 The following administrative instructions and information circulars are hereby abolished:

(a) ST/AI/133 of 8 April 1959;

(b) ST/AI/206/Rev.3 and Amend.2 of 29 February 1988 and 5 November 1992, respectively;

(c) ST/AI/249/Rev.3 of 29 March 1989;

(d) ST/AI/319 of 12 September 1984;

(e) ST/AI/381 of 24 December 1992;

(f) ST/AI/1999/10 of 29 September 1999;

(g) ST/IC/1990/13 and Amend.5 of 19 March 1990 and 28 December 1995, respectively.

(*Signed*) Joseph E. **Connor**
Under-Secretary-General for Management